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ABSTRACT

This report describes the Career Planning Center, formerly the Institute for Vocational Readiness program, run by the Student Services Division of the Milwaukee Area Technical College. It briefly describes services offered by the center which are focused around a comprehensive diagnostic approach, offering students help in developing a positive self-image, reviewing interests and aptitudes, learning how to develop a career ladder, role playing, practicing job interviews, learning about career options, planning remedial programs, or preparing financial work. The involvement of the Career Planning Center with business and industry in the area is explained in detail and the Center's efforts to provide industrial and technical assistance are discussed. In-plant training classes ranging from instruction in basic reading and mathematics through basic computer programming are described which serve to assist employees destined for layoff to be upgraded in their skills so they can bid on jobs opening up in other departments of the company. Components of the Center's on-site Career Planning seminars are described and seminar objectives are listed. Components discussed include assessment, intake, administration of an interest inventory, basic skills assessment, and group or individualized exits from the program. (NB)

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"A Response to Factory Closings: A Career Development Approach"

[John Deady, and Winifred Parker White]

To set the stage for the approach we used, Winifred and I felt you needed a little background about our operation.

Milwaukee Area Technical College (MATC) is one of sixteen district in the Wisconsin Vocational, Technical and Adult Education system. MATC has four campuses with a total combined headcount enrollment of about 75,000. The yearly FTE is about 14,000. The instructional divisions operate over 130 organized programs ranging from Adult Basic Education through a full series of Associate Degree level technical and college transfer programs.

The largest of the four campuses is located in the heart of downtown Milwaukee. About nine years ago, several project proposals were written and submitted to secure funding to set up a Career Development Center. The center was to be called the "Institute for Vocational Readiness" (IVR). It was to be run within the Student Services Division.

The Student Services Division handles recruiting, testing, admissions, counseling, financial aid, registration, health services, student affairs functions, career planning and placement, and special services within the district.

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After several rejections, our proposals were successful through the Governor's Employment and Training Office. Through extensive negotiations, it was determined that the IVR would be underwritten by four separate and distinct funding sources:

The Governor's Employment and Training Office
The Department of Industry, Labor, and Human Relations
The Milwaukee County Executive's Office, and
Milwaukee Area Technical College.

As is typical in most seed money project ventures, the outside money has since dried up, and the College now totally funds our Career Planning Program.

The IVR served over 43 community based organizations during the past nine years and has since been retitled the "Career Planning Center". The essence of services centered around a comprehensive diagnostic approach which worked exclusively with an average of twenty students per week, assisting them in developing a positive self image, reviewing interests and aptitudes, learning how to develop a career ladder, role playing, practicing job interviewing, learning about a variety of career options that are based on their career aptitudes and interests, planning a remedial program of basic skills or preparing financial aid paperwork prior to college entry.

The IVR program was the Cadillac of Cadillacs. It received very positive press throughout the area. As a result, we began to get involved with local business and industry. At first, it was when we solicited their support and began thinking they might be a source of income or equipment and material donations.

Then the economy in the area began to turn sour. All at once we began receiving calls for help. At first, it seemed that we could run in and do our thing in a day or two and continue our day-to-day operation. Then it became obvious that we needed a comprehensive approach that ultimately was designed jointly by MATC staff and personnel from the company.

The long term plan was for MATC to assist in designing a program that could continue on after MATC finished the on-site technical assistance. This would also include a method by which the instructional divisions of MATC could get in and assist, through in-plant training programs, and later foster the industry setting up long-term in-plant training classes ranging from basic math and reading through basic computer programming, etc. For many persons, the in-plant training assisted employees, who were destined for layoff, to be upgraded in their skills, so they could bid on jobs that were opening up in other departments of the company.

The Career Planning Center operates as a separate function outside of the day-to-day counseling functions at MATC. While the staff has counselors, specialists and clerical support, they devote all of their time to the task of working with groups and individuals in need of in-depth career planning. Those individuals referred to the center usually express their indecision regarding career planning and options for the future. Many are angry and have faced any number of rejections within the educational environment. It then becomes the task of the staff to begin breaking down these negative barriers and building a positive self image for the participants. This process has been very

successful. We feel that two of the most important aspects involve a non-threatening environment in which everyone, staff included, is referred to on a first-name basis. The informality seems to relieve participant tension. Secondly, we built the entire process on the premise that each person has many positive traits and abilities. We capitalize on each of them. We attempt to avoid all reference to what a person cannot do. I should also mention that the program itself is built on people. Interaction between the staff and the client as well as staff to staff and finally client to client. As long as everyone gets involved and is able to share their true feelings in a positive way, the process works.

Due to the success of our industrial/technical assistance program, the staff of the Career Planning Center has been asked by UAW-GM to continue to development of the concept so that it can be used as a model throughout the country. One of the most difficult aspects of such a venture surrounds the choice and training of the staff who will work with the program. All too often people look at a successful venture and begin to ask where they can purchase the hardware and software text materials, etc. that are used. My concern is that they fail to recognize that the cause of success is the compatibility of the staff and their dedication and understanding of the task at hand.

After hearing Winifred explain the actual mechanics of what we do in the planning and operation of the programs, if you are interested in any aspect of the Career Planning Center, we invite you or anyone from your staff to see our operation first hand in Milwaukee.

Winifred----------

At this time, I would like to give you some of the components of the on-site Career Planning seminars that are offered for the dislocated or potentially dislocated workers. The Career Planning seminars have several objectives. Briefly stated, they include:

1. To help the clients to understand the components of a typical career planning process.
2. To help the clients understand how to proceed in developing a career plan and then to begin to implement their plan.
3. To help the clients in the development of a personal assessment, which would include the basic educational abilities, interests, values, and either measured or self-assessed skills.
4. To familiarize clients with the components of a typical job search campaign.
5. To offer the clients career information and basic evaluation results which could enable them to understand their options.

Our seminar begins with an assessment. We have an introduction and an orientation. At this time, the staff takes the opportunity to begin to develop trust between the participants and the staff. Everything is on a first-name basis, and each staff person tells something about his responsibility in this seminar. This is the first step in building a rapport with the participants, letting them know that you understand some of the problems that they are facing, some of the insecurities that they are enduring at this time. Frequently the participants have questions to ask, and those questions should be answered as honestly as possible under the circumstances.

The next component is intake. The participants fill out forms with the help of the staff to identify basic relevant information, i.e., vital statistics, formal academic training, general health, possibly unassessed goals. The importance here is to give the staff an idea of appropriate academic testing. Inappropriate academic testing can be humiliating to a participant and only increases anxiety. After all, we do want an honest assessment of a person's potential and talents.

Our seminars are based upon a diagnostic and prescriptive approach. We want to help participants find out what they want to do, what they are able to do, and then it is our responsibility to show them how they might go about obtaining some realisitic goals.

The next component may be an interest inventory. This allows participation in career information and exploration; they also begin to learn about transferable skills. We usually use an inventory that can be self evaluated in order to stimulate questions and discussion. Of course, we use such reference materials as the Occupational Outlook Handbook, Chronicle Occupational Briefs, Finney-Occupational Guidance, and Career Exploration worksheets. If we find that one of the participants has severe limitations in reading and writing, picture interest inventories are used, such as the Becker Interest Inventory, or a card sort that was developed by one of our counselors in our Placement Department. It corresponds well with Holland's Self-Directed Search.

Another very important component is the basic skills assessment. We are using the ASSET Test because that is the test used by our Admissions Department. If we feel that there is a reason for verification or another test is more appropriate, then we refer to many of the other basic skills

assessments, such as the Wide-Range Achievement Test, or the Nelson or the Nelson-Denny. We will use whatever tests are practical for individual diagnosis. Recently, we have employed the use of CPP, better known as the Career Planning Program, which includes the reading skills, language usage, clerical speed and accuracy, if this is warranted, spatial relations, numerical skills, and mechanical reasoning. The CPP is particularly useful with an on-site assessment. We explain to the participants that the measured skills show where they stand at this particular point, and that if they are not satisfied with their scores, they would have the ability or opportunity to improve their skills with additional study on their own or through some regular skill-building courses.

When we have completed the seminar, our institution sets up classes on site wherever it is warranted or feasible; but we will get back to that in a few minutes.

Frequently during the interest inventory or after the basic skills assessment, there is a lot of discussion about transferable skills and future employment trends. Values clarification can also be thrown in at this time, i.e., exercises that might be relaxing and enjoyable, but would also stimulate group discussion and hopefully, self-awareness about what one's priorities are, what is important to them, what are the things that they want to consider which might even include what to do with leisure time. This is significant, because there is a lot of talk in Milwaukee about job sharing, job development, part-time employment.

Before the seminar ends, we encourage the participants to build a career ladder that tells where they are today, where they would like to be, and what

their short and long-range goals might be. Then it would include how you want to start working toward these goals. What would you do tomorrow to start working toward the goals? Where would you like to be a year from now and where would you be, say two years from now? Taking into consideration the fact that the participants at these on-site industrial seminars are older and have more work experience then many others that usually attend the Career Planning Center seminars, we don't have to spend much time on developing a work ethic or determining what those priorities are. These participants know what their responsbilities are, as far as their families are concerned, and as far as their life style is concerned. They know what is important to them. They know if they have a mortgage to pay, or automobiles which are being purchased, or even have children in college. They are usually also aware of how close they are to retirement and the effects on benefits.

The last important component is the group or individualized exits. Personally, I prefer the individualized exits where the participant is given feedback and a prescription for personal/career options; that is, further assessment if necessary, academic training, or vocational referral resources. Frequently we refer people to our vocational evaluation laboratory, where they have a chance to experience the Singer hands-on work samples. It is not unusual to find people who have worked on an assembly line for many years or even some from the teaching field, who feel that they want to work with computers until they actually experience this. Then they find out that the last thing they want to do is to sit in front of a computer all day long, punching out various programs instead of physically moving around as they have been used to doing for many years.

Other options that might be discussed during the on-site seminars are job search techniques. Many of the participants don't remember ever filling out an application for a job, and certainly, never developing a resume; they might have received their job by standing in line at some time or calling up on the telephone to find out about a job or maybe by reading the newspaper, going out to the job, being hired on the spot, and starting to work many years ago. Therefore, we frequently make referrals for hands-on work samples for exploration and aptitude and we frequently include the job search techniques.

The second most significant component of the Career Planning Program is the follow-up. It is very important that the participants have time to internalize the results and consider the various options. It may be that we finish the career seminar one week and a week later one of the participants will call one of the counselors to ask for further information, for another appointment, or to have an opportunity to go the next step, which might be to sign up for a course.

Staff concerns. It is very important to have a staff that is sensitive to the employees' insecurities. All of our staff that participate in these seminars are certified counselors and paraprofessionals who have been selected because of their ability to work with diverse groups of people, that is as far as age, race, sex and experience are concerned. The staff must also be aware of skills utilized in previous or present employment. They must know the future plans or needs of the industry involved. We have worked with several industries who are interested in increasing world-wide competition, but at the same time, decreasing their work force. Therefore, it is necessary for the employees to understand what the needs are, what the new jobs will be,

and what they entail. Union rules, regulations and benefits are of utmost importance. At AC Spark Plug and Delco Electronics, the UAW-GM union has been responsible for all of the training programs for the employees. However, we presently are working with a non-union company, a much smaller one, that wants to do the same thing. They feel that it is important that all of the employees (there are 37, actually) know what all of the jobs are. The jobs that they are referring to include blueprint reading and numerical control. Many of the employees of the small company have some difficulty with basic skills, and we are to find out what their basic skill level and aptitudes might be as well as spatial perception, which certainly would affect blueprint reading, and what the present or future work environment would be. Mechanical dexterity has already been proven in this instance. The important point here is that the training options are offered by the union or the industry to the employee.

When I mentioned staff concerns a few minutes ago and diverse populations, I meant to include life experiences as well as work experiences. Many of the present employees are single, female parents, heads of households. We also have the middle-aged breadwinner, near retirement employees, school dropouts, and employees with special needs, such as the learning impaired, the mechanically gifted, and certainly, the academically illiterate. All of these populations project different barriers to learning, environmental and personal factors that affect their work world as well as academic training. For instance, whereas a single parent, head of household might be able to make arrangements for coming to work (maybe there is even a day care center at work), she may not be able to arrange to do academic training because of the extra time and the extra responsibilities that are involved.

Next are the supportive services that we offer to the employees. These include Registration, Admissions, counseling and faculty advising, Family and Women's Resource Center support, Special Needs, (that is the visually impaired, hearing impaired, and the learning impaired, as well as physically disabled), Financial Aids, and Student Affairs. Prospective students, particularly those who have not been in an academic environment in many years, frequently need guidance and other supportive services.

The next area I wanted to briefly discuss is the instruction. Many classes have been developed on-site following the Career Planning Programs. The unions have asked our institution to give training sometimes while the employees are working or immediately after afterwards. When we set up such a program at AC Spark Plug, there were about five departments that were able to give courses, well attended, by a total of 447 employees. These included Communication Skills, Basic Reading, Basic Writing, General Education courses, such as Psychology, Economics, languages, etc.; also, a math review--many of the employees are afraid of math because they had difficulty learning math in elementary or secondary schools, yet they know that they need this in order to succeed in the numerical control program. GED preparation is another class. English As A Second Language was included. We were able to offer two telecourses, one was the Psychology of Human Relations and another was Prime Time for Parents, a program that is very much in demand. The Home Economics Department offered courses in What Do I Do with My Life?; How Do I Face Retirement?; Leisure Time Activites; Stress Management; Financial Management.

The Physical Education Department set up a wellness program that included aerobics as well as holistic health. The Business Division offered computer

and office skills. Trade and Industry offered numerical control, blueprint reading, computer aided design and computer aided manufacturing, also flexible manufacturing. Tool and die is another popular program.

The last area that I want to mention is revenue recovery, something new for Student Services. These programs are set up by technical assistance or customized training contracts. These are monitored by our Business and Industry Department and billed by the Business Department. Each department that is responsible for the development and implementation of a particular service receives credit for the monies that are earned. In our capitalistic system, this is a motivating factor because it has economic advantages for the institution, recognition for the individual staff, and credit for FTE's, (better known as full-time equivalents), for our institution. The over-all effect as a service to our community has been very positive. Once again, our community and technical college has been able to have an impact on the economic development.

There has been an increased demand for career assessment for upgrading skills, personal growth and motivation, and job satisfaction. Sometimes employees who do not have the potential of being laid off are as interested as those who already have become unemployed or are afraid that they may be so. The types of industries that have been affected are various businesses, newspapers, small metal-processing or tool and die plants, government offices, high technology industries, and even railroad companies have been involved so far.

At this time, Dr. Deady and I will be glad to answer any questions. We hope that this has been informative. We have found this to be a very exciting and satisfying experience for our institution.